

Draft
Environmental Assessment
Electrical Service Installation
Yankee Flats Group Use Shelter
Bannack State Park



March 2017



Draft Environmental Assessment

MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

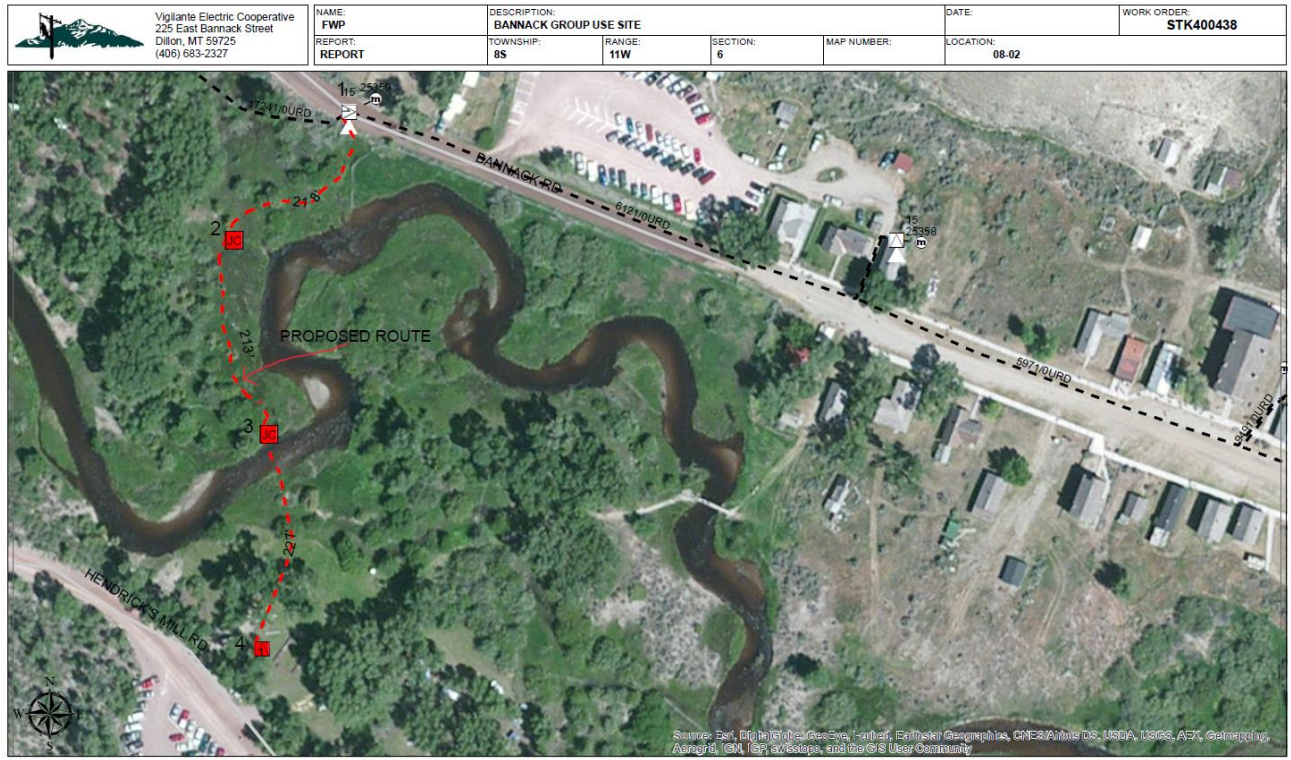
1. Type of proposed state action: Contract with local electric service provider Vigilante Electric Cooperative to extend electrical service from existing electric infrastructure owned by Vigilante Electric on the north side of Grasshopper Creek to Bannack State Park's existing Yankee Flats Group Use Shelter on the South side of Grasshopper Creek. An easement will be granted to Vigilante Electric Cooperative by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Extending the electric service will allow for electricity to be provided to groups that rent the Group Use Shelter, for maintenance and repair of the facility as well as for special events such as Bannack Days.

The new electricity service will allow the park to install exterior security lighting to reduce vandalism at this remote facility and provide safety lighting for renters coming and going to their vehicles. The area is unlit and can present safety hazards for public utilizing the shelter after dark. Electricity will also facilitate installation of a fire detection and alarm system at the shelter to help protect the facility as well as the nearby National Historic Landmark buildings in the Townsite.

2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:** Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks, Montana State Parks Division. MSP has the authority to develop outdoor recreational resources in the state per Section 23-2-101, Montana Code Annotated (MCA). The public involvement for this EA follows Section 23-1-110 MCA and Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 12.2.433.
3. **Anticipated Schedule:**
Estimated Commencement Date: May 2017
Estimated Completion Date: June 2017
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 70%
4. **Location affected by proposed action:** Section 6, Township 8S, Range 11W



Site plan for Proposed Project



5. Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>0.016</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
(existing shop area)		Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(b) Open Space/	<u>0</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
Woodlands/Recreation		Forestry	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	<u>0.016</u>	Rangeland	<u>0</u>
Areas		Other	<u>0</u>

6. Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdiction.

(a) **Permits:** Vigilante Electric Coop will be responsible for all required permits for this project.

(b) **Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Historic Masonic Lodge 3-7-77	\$12,000.00
Bannack Association	<u>\$12,000.00</u>
	\$24,000.00

7. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

Proposed Action: Montana State Parks, with the financial assistance and cooperation of the Historic Masonic Lodge #3-7-77 and the Bannack Association Friends Group, will contract with Vigilante Electric Cooperative to extend electric service to the Yankee Flats Group Use Shelter in Bannack State Park.

Following is the scope of work for Vigilante Electric Cooperative (VEC) to extend their underground electric service to the Group Use Site:

- Vigilante Electric will direct bury approximately 1400 feet of underground electric distribution cable a minimum of 30 inches deep using a vibratory plow cat. Width of cable trench will be approximately one foot and will be backfilled to existing grade after the cable is installed.
- Directionally bore under Grasshopper Creek approximately 100 lineal feet, at a depth of at least 4 feet below the stream channel. Above ground disturbance at entry and exit will be approximately three square feet at both locations.
- Install three electrical junction boxes, one at their existing facilities, one approximately 225 feet south of that, and one at the creek crossing. Each junction box will occupy approximately nine square feet.
- Install one transformer and meter pedestal at the Group Use Site. These two apparatuses will occupy approximately 10 square feet.

Need for the Action: The Group Use Shelter was constructed in 2011 for public gatherings, picnics, dances, wedding receptions, reunions, interpretive programs, etc. The shelter can be reserved for special events for a fee. The revenue generated from these rentals is used to maintain and operate Montana State Parks. Addition of electrical service to the shelter will encourage greater usage by the public and increase revenues and provide necessary public safety and security lighting. Electric service will facilitate installation of a fire detection system and alarm to protect the facility and the historic Townsite. Lighting will allow for events to be held later in the evening and into the shoulder seasons when days are shorter, electrical outlets will allow for catering of events, sound systems for dances and receptions, presentations for trainings, interpretive programs or a public movie night. Installation of electrical heaters could provide for more use in the shoulder seasons when the temperatures dip below comfort level.

Objectives for the Action(s);

To provide a safe, quality gathering place for the public that provides more than just a roof over their heads. Increase the opportunities for use by public and park for programs and events by providing electricity. Allow for more effective repair and maintenance and safety of the existing facility.

8. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:**Alternative A: No Action**

The No Action alternative would be to not install electrical service to the Yankee Flats Group Use Shelter which would result in no change in services provided to the public. Usage and rental fees would not increase. Safety concerns would remain.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

Contract with Vigilante Electric Cooperative to allow them to install electrical service to Yankee Flats Group Use Shelter from the Cooperative's electrical transformer on the north side of Grasshopper Creek.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST**EVALUATION OF IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

The proposed actions at Bannack State Park will result in a footprint of disturbance or affected area of approximately 1400 linear feet of trench and 47 square feet of transformer and junction box pads. For purposes of this Environmental Assessment only the Proposed Action on Montana State Parks property will be discussed.

1. Land Resources

Impacts of Proposed Action: The proposed project will have limited impact, initial ground disturbance from trenching and boring equipment will be filled back in and reclaimed naturally by surrounding vegetation or gravel placed to match existing conditions.

2. Air

Impacts of Proposed Action: Air quality will be minimally impacted temporarily during construction of the proposed improvements and will return to normal levels after construction.

3. Water

Impacts of Proposed Action: By boring under the stream channel for the conduit and staying well back from stream banks with the equipment, there should be no impact on the stream channel, banks or waters. This is a very standard and proven process for private electrical service companies.

4. Vegetation

Impacts of the Proposed Action: The proposed project will impact some willow and cottonwood saplings during the construction phase as well as some native grasses and plants, no special action is planned for plantings after construction as disturbance will be minimal and plants will quickly reclaim the area once installation is complete in the existing riparian area.

5. Fish/Wildlife

Impacts of the Proposed Action: Bannack State Park staff contacted Craig Fager, FWP Wildlife Biologist in Dillon Montana. Craig had no issues with the proposed project or location as it was not sage grouse habitat. Bannack staff also contacted Matt Jaeger, FWP Fisheries Biologist in Dillon, Montana. Matt has no concerns with the project if the boring under the stream channel is at least 4 feet below the stream channel. Vigilante Electric will ensure this is accomplished. Mr. Jaeger has no issues regarding the fishery due to the proposed plans designed to protect the stream.

EVALUATION OF IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

1. Noise Effects

Impacts of the Proposed Action: There will be temporary noise related to construction of the trail and trail side amenities. Noise levels will return to normal after completion of the project.

2. Land Use

Impacts of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will not impact land use as this area is currently undeveloped and will be allowed to return to natural native vegetation once installation is completed.

3. Risk/Health Hazards

Impacts of the Proposed Action: The proposed project will not create risk or safety hazards. Parks staff will ensure public access is restricted during construction to prevent the public from being injured by construction activities.

4. Community Impact

Impacts of the Proposed Action: The proposed action is minor in scope and will not impact the community. Any impacts will be positive in improving public service and improving outdoor recreation opportunities and education at the Yankee Flats Shelter. This project is a positive cooperative project involving local civic groups and the park supportive friends group.

5. Public Services/Taxes/Utilities

Impacts of the Proposed Action: None.

6. Aesthetics/Recreation

Impacts of the Proposed Action: The proposed project will improve recreational activities by providing desired electric service. Vigilante's electric equipment will be disguised by park staff if necessary to blend in with the environment. The trench will not be visible after installation.

7. Cultural/Historical Resources

Impacts of the Proposed Action: In accordance with the Montana Antiquities Act (22-3-421 to 22-3-442) and with FWPs ARM rules (12.8.501 to 12.8.10), a heritage resource review was conducted by MT State Parks heritage staff and the Montana Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Given the narrow width of the trench and the fact that it will be placed in a previously disturbed area within the Grasshopper Creek floodplain, State Parks heritage staff and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) determined that survey work and site monitoring during construction will not be needed. The project should cause no adverse impacts to heritage properties within the park.

SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE AND NEED FOR EIS

Because the proposed project is small in size and located in a previously disturbed area within Bannack State Park, the impacts to the physical and human environments will be minimal. This project will positively impact local and statewide recreation and tourism related to state parks. Based on this analysis, an Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis and an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The public notice and participation outlined below is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts, which can be mitigated. The public will be notified about this EA and the opportunity to comment through the following actions:

- Two public notices will be published in the *Dillon Tribune* and *Montana Standard (Butte)*
- One statewide press release
- Public notice on the Montana State Parks web page: <http://stateparks.mt.gov/>

The public comment period will extend for (21) twenty-one days and written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., May 6, 2017. The public can submit written comments to Bannack State Park Yankee Flats Electrical Project, FWP Region 3 Headquarters, 1400 19th Ave SO, Bozeman, MT 59718, or email to mmarcinek@mt.gov.

PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR PREPARING THIS EA

Dale Carlson, Park Manager, Bannack State Park
Montana State Parks
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Dillon Montana 59725

Roger Kasak, Assistant Park Manager, Bannack State Park
Montana State Parks
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Dillon Montana 59725

Matt Marcinek, Region Three Regional Parks Manager
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1400 S. 19th Ave So
Bozeman, Montana 59718
mmarcinek@mt.gov

List of agencies or offices consulted during preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Parks Division

Lands Division

Wildlife Division

Fisheries Division

Design & Construction Bureau

Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

Montana Office of Tourism-Department of Commerce

APPENDIX A
23-1-110 MCA
PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date: 3/1/17

Person Reviewing: Roger Kasak, Bannack State Park

Project Location: Bannack State Park

Description of Proposed Work: Contract the installation of electrical service to Yankee Flats Group Use Shelter.

Following is the scope of work for Vigilante Electric Cooperative (VEC) to extend their underground facilities to the Group Use Site:

- Direct bury approximately 1400 feet of underground electric distribution cable a minimum of 30 inches deep using a vibratory plow cat. Width of cable trench is approximately one foot and will be backfilled after the cable is installed.
- Directionally bore underneath Grasshopper Creek approximately 100 lineal feet. Above ground disturbance at entry and exit will be approximately three square feet at both locations.
- Install three electrical junction boxes, one at their existing facilities, one approximately 225 feet south of that, and one at the creek crossing. Each junction box will occupy approximately nine square feet.
- Install one transformer and meter pedestal at the Group Use Site. These two apparatuses will occupy approximately 10 square feet.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under 23-1-110 rules.

- ☐ A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments: No roadways will be built.
- ☐ B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments: No buildings will be built. Transformers may get covers built by park staff to blend them with the historic structures on the property.
- ☒ C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: In the proposed project approximately 35 c.y. will be excavated from trench and returned back.
- ☐ D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments: No parking lots will be built.
- ☐ E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments: No alternations will be made to the shoreline.
- ☐ F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments: No construction will be made in the stream. Electrical conduit and cable will be bored under Grasshopper Creek at a depth of approximately 4 feet under the streambed.
- ☐ G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments: Review completed, there will be no impact to cultural resources.
- ☐ H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments: All cables will be underground.
- ☐ I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments: There will be no change in the campsites.
- ☐ J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments:

APPENDIX B
TOURISM REPORT
MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA)/HB495

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks have initiated the review process as mandated by HB495 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Project Name: Bannack State Park Yankee Flats Group Use Shelter electrical Project

Project Location: Bannack State Park, Beaverhead County. Section 6, Township 8S, Range 11W.

Project Description:

Fish Wildlife & Parks proposes Contract with Vigilante Electric Coop to install electrical service to Yankee Flats Group Use Shelter.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, this project has the potential to positively impact the tourism and recreation industry economy if properly maintained. We are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is completed.

By providing electrical power to the Yankee Flats Group Use Shelter, it may have a positive effect on the tourism economy. There are over 65,000 annual visitors to Bannack State Park. Some of these visitors rent the Yankee Flats Group Use Shelter for family reunions, weddings and other functions. By providing power to this facility, it will attract more usage from our park visitors, especially during shoulder seasons, identified as a time in which destination visitation can increase.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to improve quality and quantity of tourism and recreational opportunities if properly maintained. We are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

Signature Jan Stoddard Date: 2/17/17